CNN - DEATH OF PRESIDENT RONALD WILSON REAGAN - NEWSNIGHT (6-7-2004)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG_slihxug4 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG_slihxug4)

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From Monday, June 7th, 2004 CNN NEWSNIGHT coverage of the death of President Ronald Wilson Reagan. Reagan served as the 40th POTUS from 1981 trough 1989.

- Coverage runs from 10:00 P.M E.T - 11:00 P.M E.T

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tomorrow night gerald and betty ford former president wednesday night george and barbara bush former president and former first ladies thursday night tim russert and friday night the sunrise special service and the burial of ronald reagan all ahead on larry king live all ahead now on cnn continuing a remarkable week of coverage news night and aaron brown erin larry thank you we'll talk tomorrow good evening again everyone it was as they say quite a weekend and already it's been quite a week by the end of it a casket burying a man will have twice span the continent it'll be seen by tens of thousands of people millions more on television there will be pomp and protocol as the week goes by and majesty it is the machinery of national gratitude and national laws but at the end of the day not really national mourning nations don't mourn cable news notwithstanding but wives do and sons and daughters do even the wives and the sons and the daughters of the most public figures we saw that today the majesty in the week to come will be for us not for them for them this week is something else again the whip begins tonight at the reagan library with cnn's frank buckley frank the headline from there aaron people here continue to pay their respects to the late president he was a president who had a talent for connecting with the average american tonight the story of one such average american who became a pen pal with the president frank we'll get to the story i promise on to war in michigan next though macomb county the home of what became known as reagan democrats cnn's kelly wallace worked that today kelly a headline well aaron ronald reagan dramatically altered the political landscape as we know it when he overwhelmingly won the support of blue-collar democrats here in the suburbs of detroit as you said

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in the suburbs of detroit as you said they became known as reagan democrats and we talked to a few of them tonight erin kelly thank you finally savannah georgia the g8 summit and iraq cnn's dana bash traveling with the president so dana a headline from you erin the president is hoping to use the g8 summit to continue his campaign to renew ties with estranged allies and an apparent deal on a new u.n resolution on iraq is just the way the white house wanted to get things started here erin dana thank you back to you with the rest shortly also on the program on this monday night ronald reagan and the evil empire did his combination of charm and challenge bring down communism the private moments of a public man the photographs of diana walker tonight and the rooster of course arrives with morning papers all that and more in the hour ahead tonight we begin in southern california this is what it looks like at the reagan library mid-evening local time at the end of the first two days of public viewing some two thousand people an hour have filed in to pay their respects the viewing will continue all night long california's governor his wife and other notables among them tomorrow or wednesday senator john kerry expected to pay a visit as well an hour before the public was permitted in this morning a ceremony was held for the reagan family as a week goes by there will be many

images some no doubt powerful but it is hard to imagine any single image will turn out to be more powerful than the one in california this morning [Music] the ceremony itself was simple and could hardly have been more moving

00:04:03 (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG_slihxug4&t=243s)

[Music] touching her cheek to the coffin nancy reagan began to cry her children by her side so tomorrow said the minister who presided will be much easier easier perhaps but not easy for most of us such private moments remain private public figures especially the spouses of former heads of state do not often have that option no matter how painful the moments carl sphere raza anthony is nancy reagan's former speechwriter and author of eight books including a two volume history first ladies and the saga of president's wives and their power 1789-1990 that's a considerable span of time he joins us tonight from los angeles nice to see you

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nice to see you i think there's a lot of focus on mrs reagan today and i wonder how she has changed in the period of the president's illness well you know um aaron i think just as if uh just as there was sort of a kind of an arc if you will uh of her growth during the eight years of the presidency and certainly the the uh life-changing uh events uh that she was witness to at that time uh i think in these last 10 years mrs reagan has had to very much rely on a on an inner strength perhaps an inner strength that she was not always aware of that she herself had i think we have intermittently heard her speak uh in these last 10 years now and then about the very essence of what was going on using the word really just just love and that it really in in the end came down to a matter of of an act of love uh when uh people wondered how it was that she was able to sustain uh this sort of supporting role and i think you know she's talking about things that for a woman of her generation she usually never talked about they had obviously this extraordinary marriage and love affair um someone suggested today that at times it was to the exclusion of all others their children in some respects and i think mrs reagan herself has said that one of the uh sad but real benefits of the president's illness was that her family reconnected yes i mean all all four of the children are on the record either in interviews or or in in books that they've written as pretty much saying that that at times

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as pretty much saying that that at times that that they all felt that way um i don't think it was a purposeful thing i just think that uh mrs reagan very much felt that that was her primary role um particularly to a husband in in public life you know one of the things that ronald reagan said that that i have not heard uh people talk about was something i think that was very true uh when confronting conflict in the world and and and he would say all we need really is an attack from outer space and you'll see how fast uh suddenly uh you know the israelis and the palestinians and everybody else will suddenly forget and drop their differences and pull together and in a sense uh that is what happened i think uh to a degree with their family i know uh patty davis had written a book uh post white house years uh in which she discussed her relationship with her parents and difficulties and it was just you know two or three years after that that i think uh this amazing change came uh of pulling them all together well it was uh thank you it was painful on the one side to watch and it's quite it's been quite lovely no matter it's not about politics it's about family to watch the reconnection in this period of their lives good to talk to you i hope you'll join us again thank you i think as most of you know ronald reagan was in fact married twice the first time to the actress jane wyman today michael reagan their adopted son made his first public comments about his father's death i am the luckiest man on the face of the planet because ronald reagan chose me to be in this family he chose me to be named reagan and boy i'll tell you i just hope for the rest of my life that i'm able to honor that name for which my father gave me michael reagan who followed in his father's footsteps on the radio he's a talk show

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footsteps on the radio he's a talk show host now father unlike son came to conservatism later in life and reagan the father never missed a chance to win new souls to his cause he found many of them in blue-collar ethnic neighborhoods in the rust belt so for more in michigan tonight here's cnn's kelly wallace tributes throughout macomb county michigan a sign of just how much this one-time democratic stronghold outside detroit embraced republican ronald reagan even though he was in the movies and all that he just seemed more of a down to earth man working class voters like 43 year old don rios a single mom and truck driver became known as reagan democrats they grew up in democratic households but voted gop for the gipper it's got to be difficult a democratic family from kentucky well i think i broke all the rules from the time i was 17 i broke every rule possible stanley groat now the macomb county republican party chairman left communist poland for the united states in 1968 and considered himself a democrat that was until reagan came along he was he was my hero because he was such a staunch opponent anti-calm in his opponent he he believed that every person is born free and should remain free these democrats caused a seismic shift in the political landscape says the man who actually coined the phrase reagan democrats in his book middle class dreams democratic pollster stanley greenberg they came right out of blue collar america progressive union blue collar america had been for john kennedy you know good catholic president uh but gave you know 74 percent of their votes to ronald reagan and for democrats that was an immense problem reagan leaves behind two very different reagan democrats those like grot who are forever linked

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those like grot who are forever linked to the gop ronald reagan set to certainly standard and you know once you are accustomed to a higher standard you don't lower yourself to lower standards and voters like rios who backed george w bush in 2000 but is contemplating supporting democrat john kerry this year a lot of people over the years they've stuck with one party whether they agree with them or not and i don't and it is because of ronald reagan that macomb county is a must stop for every presidential candidate since erin and we'll be again kelly thank you very much kelly wallace in michigan tonight laura ingram joins us now not a reagan democrat we're reasonably sure she's a talk show host an author a columnist a former reagan staffer and she is a welcome guest here just about anytime it's nice to see you you were a forgive me a kid at dartmouth post 60s did ronald reagan convert you or were you just looking for a champion no i think i think for a lot of us who came of age in the 1980s were in college in the 1980s when ronald reagan was elected a lot of us were in high school and many of us were maybe instinctively kind of republican but when reagan came on the scene it wasn't just his optimism that we're hearing so much about aaron in the last few days everyone's talking about how sunny his demeanor was and his optimism but it was his ideas and the confidence of those ideas and the resolute approach that he took to the american people that i think galvanized uh the young people in this country which is a story that i think hasn't been told enough in the coverage of ronald reagan's life and that really was transforming for american politics a lot of us i don't think really were connected i i didn't grow up as a country club republican and we didn't we didn't belong to a country club my mom was a waitress for 40 years and so ronald reagan i think touched the spirit of so many young people because he touched the common person in this country and i think that populism

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this country and i think that populism is what has stayed with me today um one quick question then one slightly more complicated one just tell the story quickly of your exit interview at the white house yeah all of us in domestic policy in 1987 1988 in the last few years in the administration we got a five-minute exit interview uh with reagan where we got to go to the office and and spend a little bit of time with him very briefly uh he showed us all around the office and he loved to show off the the bronzes all the old west bronzes the statues of horses and cowboys and we were joking about that and i literally felt like i was gonna faint because i was this was a man that i was just such a personal hero to me and i had seen all these celebrities in in washington over the the previous two years but this was when i really got to spend time with him i really felt like i was going to faint and i and i looked at him i said mr president i think i'm i think i'm going to collapse and he said you know that characteristic reagan way don't worry i'll catch you and then just then the white house photographer took the photo and this photo i still have is when he's holding my arm up and uh of course i

started laughing and uh all of us broke up laughing and that was just typically reagan's way like don't worry and i think the message to the country was don't worry uh the american spirit will be there to catch us all and uh that was that was a good memory let me a more complicated question do you think that that he and uh was more successful and perhaps american conservatism has been more successful at politically as opposed to socially that social conservatism has not caught up with tax cuts strong military defense and the like well actually i i think i disagree with that a little bit aaron because on issues like the most contentious of issues like the issue of abortion in this country contrary to what i think a lot of people think younger people are actually becoming more pro-life gallup poll after gallup poll has shown that over the last 10 years the country is still divided absolutely but ronald reagan made the issue of of life in the abortion question something that we could actually debate about in this country and he he didn't do a lot substantively to push the

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do a lot substantively to push the pro-life issue but that became one of the cornerstones of the republican party under his presidency and i think we're going to see that continue to germinate as the years go on especially among the younger generations and i really think ronald reagan deserves a lot of credit for that laura it's nice to see you nice to see you thank you lori ingram with us tonight [Music] there's a story now famous about a report leslie stahl did for 60 minutes it was a very tough critique of the reagan administration policies yet after it aired michael deaver called ms stahl to thank her a bit puzzled she asked him why don't worry he said nobody listens to the words the visuals he said they were great his visuals for the most part the girl scouts the bunting the balloons backdrops that spoke volumes and still do here's cnn's jeff greenfield when president bush speaks his message is spelled out literally behind him just in case you don't get the meaning of what he says when john kerry appears in public a battalion of veterans appears with him just in case you didn't know he's a decorated vietnam combat vet president clinton constantly appeared in front of a wall of blue a phalanx of cops just in case you thought he was another one of those soft on prime democrats and in one way or another each of these highly public figures is reflecting the influence of what this man did what reagan did was and his team is changed the way the public sees politicians and the way ideas are sold to the public joe lockhart served as press secretary to president bill clinton what reagan brought with his team was a sense that a story had to be packaged and marketed and sold with visual images and reagan was the best salesman that we've seen you know in a generation that salesmanship drew the attention of the clinton white house says former press secretary mike mccurry my memory is that we did look back at

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my memory is that we did look back at some things like when when the reagan white house would launch a major initiative how did they do it how did they use the white house itself as a platform for various visual events but there's a danger in adopting such communication skills the very power of an image can come back to haunt a white house bush's top political aid karl rove now says he wishes that mission accomplished sign had never been used and for all the focus on reagan's amiable style and ever-present smile democratic adversaries like mike mccurry credit him with substance as well ronald reagan's ability to reduce complicated ideas to their essence or sometimes their their simplistic essence was much admired because he really engaged the american people and he he talked to them in a way that got them interested in ideas and interested in the proposals he made as president now if it's true that the reagan model will be studied for years to come by white house operatives they may want to pause in their analyses of camera angles and colors and backdrops and ask one question with all of our communication skills do we really know what ideas the president wants to communicate that's a question the reagan white house rarely had to ask aaron so let me turn this just a little bit is there a danger or is it a benefit um for the for the bush white house in the passing of president reagan is it more something that will be politically helpful this is a sort of an awkward question or at least i'm asking it awkwardly but i think you know what i'm trying to get at here yeah you know what i i've come to decide that it's important for those of us at cable news to say that not every event has a

clear political impact i've heard this analysis that it's going to help bush by reminding people of moral clarity and conservative principles it's going to hurt bush by um i'm talking about the death now by contrasting him he seems more diminished but what i do

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he seems more diminished but what i do believe is that there is some feeling among some republicans that as far as the bush white house communications effort is concerned that to some extent they may be fighting the last war that that they may have not focused as much as they should on the point that both the democrats and reagan's one-time aides have made that this was about communicating very clear ideas ideas that that he fought very hard for for years jeff thank you jeff greenfield thank you good way to start a bar room fight among historians is to say that ronald reagan won the cold war well that's not totally true a good way is to hide the sherry but it's the start historians differ widely on the degree to which the united states won and the soviet bloc lost none we venture against would disagree on the motivation of the cold warrior in chief you're cnn's bruce morton you're down here ronald reagan hated communism evil was the word he used about it they are the focus of evil in the modern world his feelings about communism led him to send us troops to topple the government of the little island of grenada to support a repressive right-wing government in el salvador he also supported the contra rebels fighting the communist sandinista regime in nicaragua but reagan's anti-communism played most largely in the cold war against mikhail gorbachev's soviet union mr gorbachev open this gate mr gorbachev tear down this wall but in fact the odd couple became friends they held five summits and in 1987 signed an agreement to reduce intermediate-range nuclear forces the first such agreement ever reagan learned a russian phrase we have listened to the wisdom of in an old russian maxim and i'm sure you're familiar with it my semester general secretary though my pronunciation may give you difficulty

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pronunciation may give you difficulty the maxim is dovahyay no prover i trust but verify gorbachev complained once you keep saying that in 1988 reagan went to moscow a visit which once would have seemed as unlikely as dorothy's to oz he announced a new era in u.s soviet relations but it was even more than that ten months after reagan left office the berlin wall came down gorbachev resigned in december of 1991 and the evil empire was history lasting impact is that he won the cold war and we are now in an era which is a very dangerous world but we don't wake up every morning with the threat of a nuclear exchange which could annihilate the globe he did bring down the soviet empire and he did it through strength of character and vision and his history will judge him i think very highly for that yes reagan played a role made a contribution but i don't think it's fair to say he won the cold war he contributed to the victory in the gold war but you got to give harry truman credit and dwight eisenhower and kennedy johnson ronald reagan a president who changed his world bruce morton cnn washington we'll leave the bar fights to the historians but there's a good discussion here anyway richard allen was ronald reagan's national security adviser from 1980 to 82 before that a chief foreign policy adviser for mr reagan during the campaign and he also worked for richard nixon and he joins us tonight from eagle colorado and it's nice to see you sir how were reagan and nixon different reagan and nixon were different in many ways first of all in personality but they were also similar and particularly similar in that ronald reagan had as much information as he needed well prior to being president to address any issue of public policy foreign or

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any issue of public policy foreign or domestic and in that sense actually was superior to richard nixon in the information that he had that's not the public image um i'm also was surprised to hear bruce morton's observations and wish that he would be on this show so we could have a little discussion about perceptions of ronald reagan ronald warrian's ideas were well-formed uh well-formed in the 1960s and throughout the 1970s and one shouldn't forget that it was ronald reagan's assault on gerald ford over the issue of united states national security policy and foreign policy in the form of daetant which he considered to be a bankrupt

policy that nearly won him the nomination and nearly unseated gerald ford so reagan is 76 was a man seven 1976 when he ran against gerald four reagan was a man of ideas and that legacy is now coming to the fore uh the tributes that you've just heard from clinton's advisors were i think well received and quite accurate let me uh a couple of questions if i may the the president had a simple i don't mean simplistic but a simple vision of what the world should be and how people should live in relationship to their governments is that fair enough no it's easy to understand but if i may uh respond to your question by a story sure in 1977 just a few days after jimmy carter was elected or rather inaugurated as president of the united states i was sitting with ronald reagan in pacific palisades there to ask him to do something for me we had a discussion that turned out not to be 15 or 20 minutes but lasted about five or six hours at the end he said to me and it was a deep and detailed discussion of foreign national security policy said something that changed my life and convinced me that he ought to be president he said some people think my views on the cold war are simplistic they're not they're

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are simplistic they're not they're simple and there's a difference that means they're easy to understand my view of the cold war is that we win and they lose what do you think about that the capital is preparing for the sort of event it has not seen in a very long time and for the first time in the post-9 11 era in the new normal all things begin with security from capitol hill tonight cnn's joe johns tight security just got tighter around washington due to the lying and state ceremony for president ronald reagan the capitol will close for tours at 4 30 p.m monday june 7th more security is coming as local and federal law enforcement prepare for the first full-blown series of events here honoring the passing of a president since lyndon johnson died 30 years ago we're ready for this we've practiced this we've rehearsed it and it goes on a precision timetable the week will feature a horse-drawn caisson and arrival ceremony at the capitol a 24-hour vigil and a funeral at the national cathedral expected to attend government leaders who would show up at a state of the union address plus former presidents heads of state the family of the late president and up to one hundred thousand people filing past the reagan casket perched on this 140 year old catapult in the capital rotunda no cameras no backpacks post 911 law enforcement sees the whole setting as a potential target that's a pretty powerful group of people and you couple that with just the very image that this dome signifies across this land and across this world it can be attractive we are concerned about that but not the panicky besides bomb sniffing dogs and extra police patrols it means canceled leave for large numbers of officers we have as a

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we have as a simi valley simi valley california the reagan library has been going on much of the day people quietly passing the former president's casket by midweek it will make its way to washington and then back home friday for burial at sunset in simi valley as we heard earlier in the program about two thousand people an hour have been streaming through the library to pay their respects no one asked them to come yet to have president reagan as we've heard so many times in the last few days was known as the great communicator capital g capital c for the way he connected with people the way they responded he could connect on a smaller scale as well they don't usually think of our presidents as having pen pals especially in the age of email and instant messaging but ronald reagan did here's cnn's frank buckley this is the first picture that i received from ronald reagan actor lorraine wagner was 13 years old ronald reagan a movie star it was 1943 when the teenaged girl from philadelphia wrote to thank reagan for the autographed publicity shot she couldn't have imagined it would spark a five-decade-long correspondence with a man who would become governor of california president of the united states and friend it was important to him and it was important to me the two things went together it wasn't a sudden thing that because he became president he decided that friendship was important it always was reagan sent more than 250 letters in all from 1943 to 1995. you'll excuse this card please as i'm writing this on the set of this film what would you like to do in the army dance reagan the actor eventually becoming reagan the politician writing to lorraine wagner from the oval office wagner would eventually become an irs worker mary and have two children reagan's

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mary and have two children reagan's first marriage to actress jane wyman he would acknowledge was troubled i know she loves me even though she thinks she doesn't keep your fingers crossed for me the marriage would end in divorce mr reagan later marrying nancy davis the reagans and the wagners were never social equals but when the wagners went west for vacation reagan was glad to greet them outside his pacific palisades home there were letters and presents exchanged both ways the wagners visited the oval office three times twice presenting the president with homemade politically themed garbage cans once you were gone i had a chance to really look at it and that's when i realized i hadn't really expressed my appreciation i've looked at it a half dozen times since you left and it's almost as if i find something new each time reagan reveals in the letters his human touch and his inner feelings his thoughts on world events covering the last half of the 20th century like his views on communism and china it is 1972 reagan is governor of california richard nixon president nixon visits china personally i think the red chinese are a bunch of murdering bums i think the president probably believes the same it is a turbulent time in the u.s student protests are raging he did mention in one of his letters that he felt that he was being successful as governor because he was burned in effigy a little sooner than some other governors throughout their 50 years of epistles reagan could count on wagner to defend him in letters to editors and to provide him with a window into middle america lorraine wagner could count on correspondence that continued to come even after reagan left office january 1992. i've just addressed a letter to mikhail gorbachev and another to boris yeltsin i'm really optimistic about what's going on in the soviet union reagan expressed gratitude for their years of exchanges in his final letters

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years of exchanges in his final letters to lorraine the teenaged fan who remained a fan but became a friend i reread a lot of the letters i think about them and i care about them and i'm grateful for the friendship and the memories that they they give me it's a treasure steve from president reagan came just before he announced in a letter to the world that he'd been diagnosed with alzheimer's disease in that final personal letter to lorraine he acknowledged her and thanked her for their friendship meanwhile here at the library tonight americans continue to file past the casket of president reagan they are coming as you said aaron by at a rate of somewhere around eighteen hundred to two thousand people per hour i've been through there it is quiet inside as people walk past there is an honor guard at attention this will continue until tomorrow at approximately 6 p.m local time the following day the president's casket moves to washington erin frank thanks just stay on the shot for a second just look at those young faces obviously all too young to have known to have lived in the time of president reagan but someday someday many of them not all certainly but many of them will remember this little moment in their life when they were out in simi valley california and they walked through a presidential library past the casket of the 40th president of the united states

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